

Ross Dean Funeral Home  
Second building from the east on the block  
between Bond and Hudson streets  
Plains  
Sumter County  
Georgia

HABS No. GA-2215

HABS  
GA,  
131-PLAIN  
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### ROSS DEAN FUNERAL HOME

HABS No. GA-2215

Location: Second building from the east in the Main Street business block between Bond and Hudson streets, Plains, Sumter County, Georgia.

USGS Plains Georgia Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 16, E 746200 N 3546900.

Present Owner: Frank and Albert Williams.

Present Occupant/Use: Storage for old farming equipment and furniture.

Significance: The buildings in this business block were erected between 1896-1916 as brick was used to gradually replace original wood-frame structures. Situated southwest of the Plains Depot, this block was the regional business hub before the Depression.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1912.
2. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a chain of title to the property. Deeds are from the Clerk's Office, Sumter County Courthouse, Americus, Georgia.
  - 1889 Deed December 10, 1889, recorded September 18, 1893, Deed Book Y, page 577. M.L. Hudson sold a corner lot fronting 30' on Main Street to W.L. Thomas for \$50.
  - 1938 Deed July 26, 1938, recorded July 26, 1938, Deed Book 22, page 149. W.L. Thomas sold a 44' x 100' lot with two one-story brick buildings to Lillian Bowers for \$2,611.29.
  - 1938 Deed August 4, 1938, recorded August 9, 1938, Deed Book 22, page 156. Lillian F. Bowers sold the 44' x 100' lot to F.F. Timmerman and O.A. Williams for \$1,000.
  - 1941 Deed January 10, 1941, recorded January 10, 1941, Deed Book 26, page 13. Ida Lee Timmerman sold "A certain lot with two one-story buildings" to O.A. Williams for \$3,000.

1952 Deeds January 1, 1952, recorded February 28, 1952, Deed Book 40, pages 499-500. O.A. Williams sold one-third of the interest in the building to his son Frank and the other one-third to his other son, Albert.

3. Original plans and construction: None have been located.
4. Alterations and additions: The original doors, which were suspended on sliding rollers, have been replaced. A sprinkler system was added in the 1950s.

B. Historical Context: In 1912, Ross Dean opened a funeral parlor in this building, working here until 1917 when he moved the business up the street to the new annex on the east side of the Oliver-McDonald Company (see HABS No. GA-2220). Dean was listed on the board of directors of the Oliver-McDonald Company in 1901,<sup>1</sup> and a 1910 directory described the firm's service as "furniture, general merchandise and undertakers." Dean probably moved into his new funeral parlor as the Oliver-McDonald Company expanded, still working closely with the furniture manufacturers, who provided him with caskets, an alliance typical to the period. In the early years, he used a mule-drawn hearse that pulled up to the front of the building and was admitted through the large doorway. Metal glides extant above these doors, indicate that the building once had sliding doors.

In the 1930s the building was purchased by the Williams Cotton Warehouse and was used for storing cotton (see HABS No. GA-2214). As the cotton industry waned throughout the region, the Williams retained the building for general storage. During Carter's campaign and presidency, Frank Williams's sons, George and John, opened the Peanut Museum, which featured a video showing how peanuts are grown and displayed old peanut-harvesting equipment. Much of the equipment is still stored in the building.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The smallest building on the block, this one-story building was constructed to function as a work space, with a front access for vehicles.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

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<sup>1</sup> Beth Walters, History of Plains, Georgia, 1885-1985, 1985 p. 56.

1. Overall dimensions: This one-story rectangular building is 21' x 100' with a four-bay front facade.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Walls: Brick walls are seven-course American bond; east and west walls are shared with adjacent buildings.
4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing brick.
5. Porches: A corrugated-metal shed roof runs the length of the facade and across that of the adjacent building to the east. It is supported on chamfered wood posts set in battered concrete pedestals.
6. Chimneys: Two small exterior chimneys along the east parapets served wood- or coal-burning stoves.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: A large doorway in the east bay of the front facade was built to admit the mule-drawn hearse. This doorway consists of one large door on the east and two slightly narrower doors that fold in half on hinges, allowing the entire space to be opened. Each of these wood doors has two panels above and below a large single light. This doorway is set off from the facade by a chamfered door frame. A door in the westernmost bay was used by pedestrians; it has two panels, one light, and a rectangular transom. Over the door is a brick arch and under the arch is a semicircular transom with four lights divided by three vertical muntins. On the south/rear facade are double seven-panel doors in a blue frame; the door on the west has a screen. A brick segmental arch over the door consists of two courses of rowlocks topped by a projecting row of headers.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Other than the door glazing, this building has no windows.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The rectangular roof slopes downward slightly from front to back and is obscured by a stepped brick parapet with concrete coping.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: A metal gutter runs along the cornice on the rear.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Historically, the interior was an unpartitioned rectangular space about 20' wide x 98' deep. A partitioned section toward the back was added for the museum office.
  2. Flooring: Approximately 4' x 5' concrete slabs.
  3. Wall and ceiling finish: Approximately 1" thick plaster covers the brick walls. The ceilings are narrow, beaded tongue-and-groove panels.
  4. Hardware: A metal rail on which the large folding doors could slide is extant across the top of the door frame and bends around along the east wall.
  5. Mechanical equipment:
    - a. Heating: Two stove-pipe holes on the east wall indicate that the structure was originally heated by coal- or wood-burning stoves. The building presently has no heat or air conditioning.
    - b. Lighting: Fluorescent tube fixtures run from north to south on the ceiling
    - c. Plumbing: There are no sinks or bathrooms. The structure has a sprinkler system installed together with that in the adjacent building on the east, as well as the warehouse behind it on Bond Street.
- D. Site: This is the second building in a row of eight facing north onto Main Street. A sidewalk runs in front of the building with a curb cut in front of the large doorway.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: None have been located.
- B. Early Views: ca. 1925 photograph in Why Not the Best? (p. 32) shows the entire block
- C. Interviews:

Frank Williams, current owner, interview by Elizabeth Barthold, July 26, 1989.  
Plains, Georgia.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Deed Books are from the Clerk's Office, Sumter County Courthouse, Americus, Georgia.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Carter, Jimmy, Why not the Best?, Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1975.

Walters, Beth, History of Plains, Georgia, 1885-1985, Americus, Ga.: Gammage Print Shop, 1985.

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